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F.B.I. LIKELY TO ASK KEY REAGAN AIDES ABOUT 1980 DEBATE

INQUIRY ON CARTER NOTES

Investigation Seen as Looking
at Differing Recollections.
From Casey and Baker

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 1 — The Federal Bureau of Investigation said today that its inquiry into the 1980 Presidential campaign would probably require interviews with leading Reagan Administration officials.

These officials include William J. Casey, Director of Central Intelligence, and James A. Baker 3d, chief of staff at the White House.

As the investigation of alleged campaign abuses began to focus on the differing recollections of these two Reagan advisers, the Administration was suffering a separate, growing problem of internal friction centered on the same two principals.

Staff speculation increased about possible resignations or dismissals, and partisans of Mr. Baker and Mr. Casey privately criticized one another over the 1980 incident in which Reagan aides obtained and used papers outlining President Carter's strategy for meeting Ronald Reagan in their showdown debate on national television.

Aides' Recollections Differ

A major point of the F.B.I. inquiry and of a parallel one being opened in Congress is Mr. Baker's recollection that the Reagan debate preparation team, which he directed, did obtain Carter briefing materials and that these had come from Mr. Casey, who was then campaign manager. Mr. Casey, however, has said he has no such recollection.

In the absence of a full explanation of precisely how and what Carter materials were obtained in the campaign, considerable energy in the Administration was being invested in private recriminations. These extend to both the incident itself and to how well the President and his advisers responded to the growing controversy in first belittling the matter as a political incident but then allowing the Justice Department's initial "monitoring" of it to become a formal investigation.

Campaign Aides to Be Queried

The F.B.I. said it would begin interviewing workers from the 1980 campaign next week, including both ranking officials and others who might explain the incident.

The level of strong feeling was indicated in the language of one of Mr. Baker's colleagues, David A. Gergen, director of White House communications. Asked by The Los Angeles Times whether he was involved in using a "mole" in the Carter White House, he replied sharply, "They can't pin that rap on me."

Last week he initially recalled seeing no Carter briefing material. This week an apologetic Mr. Gergen said he had found some campaign material in his old files and turned it over to the Justice Department.

A second Administration official who is considered a Baker colleague, David A. Stockman, the director of the Office of Management and Budget, was also criticized for publicly admitting to using what he termed "pilfered" debate material in preparing Mr. Reagan for the debate. Richard A. Viguerie, a conservative direct-mail fund-raiser, was among those critics.

Mr. Stockman and Mr. Gergen, in particular, are the focus of speculation about a possible resignation or dismissal. Some White House officials feel any such possibility should be delayed to avoid compounding the controversy; others feel the Administration's initial attempt to contain the controversy, with Mr. Reagan at first dismissing it as "much ado about nothing," was ill-advised.

The debate and controversy and staff rancor have arisen at a sensitive moment for the White House, which has been preparing for a re-election campaign in which Mr. Baker is expected to play a principal role.

Administration staff members meanwhile, said they were directed Wednesday by the White House counsel's office to search their files for any additional information beyond campaign material related to the controversy and to send it to the Justice Department for review. It was not immediately clear whether the Administration would publicly release any new information it discovered, as it did Tuesday at President Reagan's news conference when he promised a thorough investigation by the Justice Department.

Democrat Sees Possible Bias

The department's impartiality was challenged today by Charles T. Manatt, the Democratic national chairman. He said that an independent prosecutor was needed to look into the debate incident and the possibility that a Reagan campaign's "intelligence operation," which Democrats contend was run by Mr. Casey, extended beyond that to the area of the Carter Administration's secret attempts to gain the release of the American hostages held by Iran, a sensitive issue in the campaign.

"The integrity-in-Government issue is flatly before us," Mr. Manatt declared at a news conference at which he contended that Attorney General William French Smith, formerly Mr. Reagan's personal attorney, might favor the Administration.

The Justice Department's spokesman, Thomas P. DeCair, accused the Democrats of trying to inject politics into the investigation and said that the department was "perfectly capable of conducting a fair, thorough and independent investigation of any element of this Administration."

Reagan Promises Responsiveness

The White House echoed this view. "The President will be totally responsive to any question put to him," Mr. Reagan's spokesman, Larry Speakes, said in Santa Barbara, Calif., where the President was spending the holiday weekend at his ranch.

Mr. Speakes, asked about charges that the Iranian hostage issue might have been the object of campaign espionage, stressed that the "President was not aware of anything like that," and that all questions should wait on the Justice Department inquiry. Thus far, while Carter Administration veterans have questioned whether this subject was involved in the alleged political espionage, no evidence has been offered.

"The Justice Department is looking into the whole matter, moles and woodchucks and all," said Mr. Speakes, showing some exasperation at the rounds of questions on the briefing controversy.

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